DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 185 IR 052 636

AUTHOR Webb, Gisela M.
TITLE Changing Organizational Cultures in Libraries through Effective Leadership Communication.
PUB DATE 10 Jul 88
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Library Administration and Management Association President's Program at the Annual Convention of the American Library Association (New Orleans, LA, July 10, 1988).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Libraries; Career Counseling; Change; *Communication Skills; Ethics; Higher Education; *Leadership Qualities; *Library Administration; *Library Personnel; *Motivation; Needs Assessment; Rewards; Role Models; Staff Development; *Trust (Psychology); Values

ABSTRACT

This paper begins by discussing the need for strong leadership in libraries to create adaptable organizations and to involve employees in the management process. The attributes of the new library leaders who can reach these goals are then discussed. It is suggested that they must: (1) be excellent communicators of values, goals, and new directions; (2) listen carefully to discern emerging organizational and human resource issues; (3) be involved in creating a new organizational culture based on a real need for change in a library; (4) be able to create and sustain a trust relationship with their employees and the environment which they serve; (5) develop an organizational history and analyze and articulate a library's history; (6) be visionary leaders who can communicate a need for change and inspire employees to create fresh and exciting opportunities for themselves and the organization; (7) provide opportunities for professional and personal growth; (8) act as role models; (9) be involved in career counseling; (10) offer carefully designed and implemented reward systems; (11) reinforce core values through appropriate recruitment and orientation of new staff members; (12) communicate their commitment to change in words and sustained action; and (13) possess the skills to implement new organizational and programmatic changes and build the same skills in their staffs. (9 references) (CGD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED303185

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES IN LIBRARIES THROUGH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION

By

Gisela M. Webb
Assistant Director of Libraries
for
Administrative Services

Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX. 79409

July 10, 1988

IR052636

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Gisela M.Webb

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES IN LIBRARIES THROUGH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

Libraries as organizational entities, like other for profit and non-profit organization in the country are in a state of transition. The prevalent hierarchical structures through which they have traditionally achieved organizational goals are no longer adequate to respond to rapidly changing environments and to solve the increasingly complex problems caused by technological advancements, the information proliferation, and highly educated employees which expect more control over their work.

Libraries are entering this transition after a period of organizational stability created by long tenures of many directors, who towards the end of their careers concerned themselves primarily with preserving the organizational status-quo. As an increasing number of these long term library directors retire, their parent institutions and staffs are looking for new "leadership with vision and the ability to get the vision implemented."1 The leadership qualities of their potential successors are appraised based on their records as change agents, their management styles, and their ability to handle complex human resources problems. The proliferation of discussions and descriptions of organizational innovations at

professional library conferences and in the literature attest to an increased change momentum, which in turn create new expectations, and/or stress in those anticipating or already involved in the change process.

Hopes and tensions abound in today's libraries. Risk takers are energized by the prospect of change and are eager to move forward and experiment. Others who have chosen the profession to meet strong security needs are frustrated by the lack of clear directions and an uncertain future. All, however, are looking for strong leadership to harness their dormant energies, alleviate their anxieties and "infuse the organization with purpose and direction, to motivate members of the organization toward realization of organizational goals, and to influence positively the perceptions which the environment holds regarding the organization."2 All expect to play an active role in this process of re-creating their organizations.

During this period of transition the challenges for library leaders are exciting and manifold. They are required to embody the values, hopes and ambitions of library staffs and need the ability to translate them into a new organizational vision. They will be asked to dismantle outdated organizational structures, to institute enlightened managerial practices, and to guide their staffs in creating new services and systems. To meet these challenges, the new library leaders will have to be

excellent communicators. They will need to use verbal, non-verbal, symbolic, and written communication to embrace the forthcoming struggle with conflicting values and goals. They will have to listen carefully to discern emerging organizational and human resources issues, act as role models and mentors, provide opportunities for professional and personal growth, use and share their power to build a new social fabric and order, and inspire their staffs to contribute towards a cause greater than themselves.

CREATING A NEW ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

A new organizational vision must be based on a real need for change in a library. Most likely new leaders will have been chosen because they are perceived as embodying the values which are sought to fill that need. It is therefore essential that they have arrived at a personal credo and are able to articulate their managerial philosophy, which will guide their actions through turbulent times.

Kouzes and Posner suggest that one cannot lead others until one has first led oneself through a struggle with opposing values. When leaders clarify the principles that will govern their lives and the ends that they will seek, they give purpose to their daily decisions. An ethical set of standards gives a point of reference for navigating the sometimes stormy

seas of organizational life. It guides choices of action regardless of the situation and communicates personal integrity which is essential to believability and trust.3

Building Trust

Leaders who want to inspire a new organizational vision must be able to create and sustain a trust relationship with their employees and the environment which they serve. Building trust is a time consuming task, especially in todays organizational climate where cynicism, hopelessness and skepticism of authority abound. It will require courage, faith, patience, and an understanding that without it, the change process cannot be successful. A trust relationship between leaders and followers will provide the framework within which new behaviors can be practiced, risk taking can occur, and failure will not be punished. It will primarily result from the communication of moral goals and the establishment of ethical behavior patterns. These need to be consistent with the personal credo of a library's leader and meet the needs of the organization and its employees. Envisioned and expected are goals similar to the four which John Gardner viewed as essential for responsible leadership:

1. Releasing human potential;
2. Balancing the needs of the individual and the community;
3. Defending the fundamental values of the community; and

4. Instilling in individuals a sense of initiative and responsibility."4

During the process of creating a trust relationship within a library, leaders need to be highly accessible to and be able to communicate with staff at all levels. They will be called upon over and over to clarify their vision, to explain the underlying philosophy, to model behaviors consistent with the vision, and to defend the beliefs that guide their actions. Using images with which the employees can identify, speaking their language, expressing their needs, and articulating their dreams will enlist support and create a sense of oneness. This kind of communication is vital to the creation of an organizational culture, because it explains and reinforces desired practices, attitudes, and philosophies. When establishing a trust relationship with its parent institution, library leaders need to take into consideration that the environment which provides inputs and that receives output for their organization are not the same. Rather it functions in what Euster calls a two environment open system. In such a system the control environment, like a university administration, city or county government for example grants budgets, while the users, the library patrons, make their needs known directly to the library.5 It is critical for a library leader in changing organizations to persuade the control environment of the necessity to adapt, to alter mission and goals, and to receive

funding for valid services or forms of information resources requested by patrons. This separation of the control environment from the user environment leaves library leaders often without strong power bases and increases their need for credibility, trust, and persuasion to substantiate their need for sparse resources. Library leaders often have to sell intangible benefits in a very competitive environment. If the need is for automation, for instance, libraries are now competing with all other city, county, and university divisions and departments and are at a disadvantage since cost and benefits are difficult to establish for information access. A library leader may therefore choose to include the need for increased automation in his vision to become the best library in the region or state and sell the prestige prestige and status this will bring to the parent institution.

Developing an organizational history

Before a library administrator can accurately formulate a new organizational vision, he/she must develop an organizational history and analyze its core values. Every organization has an existing culture and libraries are no exception. It consist of formal and informal policies, modes of interactions, significant historical events, outstanding individuals, traditions, common expectations and values. It provides cohesiveness and a sense of belonging, facilitates understanding, communication and problem solving.

Analyzing and articulating a library's history builds a common linkage among members. In particular, library leaders need to listen to and repeat significant anecdotes, interview key players, meet with staff members of all levels, and analyze their interpretations of the past. Existing core values and important historical figures and events will emerge. These will be different for each institution and may be expressed as adherence to a strong work ethic, pride in the quality of reference service, accuracy in cataloging, being part of an outstanding research university or network, viewing the library staff as one's extended family, building excellent special collections, employing professionally active staff, having a renown library director, to name a few. By articulating these values and repeating them in advertisements for vacant positions, interviews of potential staff, orientation programs, brochures, newsletters, in casual and formal conversations, a sense of organizational history can be developed and managed. It will provide the foundation on which the new vision is build and communicates respect for the past. It is important to carefully choose those accomplishments and achievements which reinforce newly emerging expectations of excellence.

Creating a Vision

"A vision is the force that invents the future. Leaders spend considerable effort gazing across the horizon of time,

imagining what it will be like when they have arrived at their final destination." 6 Todays libraries are in need of visionary leaders who can communicate a need for change and inspire employees to create fresh and exciting possibilities for themselves and the organizations they serve. These leaders are pioneers who are not afraid to seek challenges, take risks, and experiment in order to find better ways of doing things. They will clarify conflicting demands, values and goals. They need to have the courage to confront conflict, use it, shape it and mediate it. Above all they must communicate enthusiasm for a better future and make their employees believe that they have the ability to realize that future. To enable them to create support for their vision, these leaders must know the aspirations, dreams, and hopes of their staffs and instill in them the confidence that they have the capabilities to realize it. Visionary leaders create causes in which people can believe and which transcends their self-interests. Communicating such a vision requires enthusiasm and passion. An excellent example of a powerful vision was President Kennedy's announcement that the United States were going to send a man to the moon by the end of the sixties. Before he could make such an announcement, he needed to be sure that it was technologically possible to pursue such a goal. In addition, he needed to be certain that it would appeal to the values of the American Public and that the possible sacrifices demanded by the implementation of such a vision would be supported.

Library leaders may choose as their vision membership in the Association of Research Libraries or the Research Libraries Group, implementation of automation and dial-in access, involving staff through participative management, obtaining faculty status for professionals or instituting a promotional system, erecting a new building, creating a large endowment etc. or a combination of some or all of the above.

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

Empowering Others

"Leaders do not achieve success by themselves. Exemplary leaders enlist the support and assistance of all those who must make the project work. They involve, in some ways, those who must live with the results and they make it possible for others to do good work. They encourage collaboration, build teams and empower others. They enable others to act."7

How can a library leader enable others to act, to let go of old expectations, tear down comfortable, but inadequate structures, take risks, experiment with new approaches and create new patterns for serving their constituents?

Traditionally libraries achieved their goals through a hierarchical arrangement of divisions and departments with

formal communication flowing primarily from the top down. These organizational structures are no longer supportive of the emerging functions and programs, which are created by computerization, and demanded by information proliferation, staff and user expectations.

Effective library leaders will have to examine work flows, environments, positions, job requirements and tasks and find better structures and means to enable all employees to contribute their talents towards solving complex organizational problems.

In the course of assessing a library's history, a new leader will find that most employees will express their expectations for and support of new managerial practices. While everybody needs to be given the opportunity to prove their commitment to organizational changes, it will be essential to the success of organizational change to identify those are committed to the change process from those who merely state their support. Recognizing those who agree with the vision and empowering them to act, will communicate a serious commitment to change and reinforce their willingness to model the desired behaviors.

For example, in libraries with long term autocratic directors, the employees in formal leadership roles will usually

reflect the leadership style of the director. They will generally agree with the director, expect strong directives, appear passive and acquiescent towards their superiors while exhibiting autocratic behaviors towards their subordinates. They can be expected to support the hierarchical organizational structures and communication channels.

Such organizations also have very strong informal organizational leaders, who have organized work flow, maintained group cohesiveness, encouraged lateral communication, provided emotional support to individuals, and evaluated the effectiveness of services and managers. These informal leaders usually yield a great deal of power based on their competencies and personality traits, but they have never achieved the formal recognition and authority that goes with that power. A new library director who wants to create a more participative environment may start by recognizing the competencies of these informal leaders, formalizing their authority through promotions into positions of power, and soliciting their help in communicating the new core value of participative management. As Herbert White points out "it makes perfectly good sense to notice natural leaders within a library and groom them for management promotions."8

The promotion of such natural leaders into positions of power will signal to all employees that expertise will be

rewarded in the future. Because their power is based on competence and the good will of those who perform the daily tasks, promoting these leaders will substantially increase upward and lateral communication within the organization. This assures that the new values are disseminated widely and reinforced by the formal and informal organization. It will result in increased contact between organizational levels and facilitate the sharing of ideas and information.

To further reward excellence at all levels, library leaders may want to institute upward evaluations to signal to staff that the same performance expectations are in effect for all and that staff perceptions and insights are important in organizational decision making. Too many administrators and leaders have never asked for employee feedback on their performance, because it is very risky. Instituting such evaluations can greatly improve communication throughout the library, because staff realizes the appreciates the thrust exhibited in their judgement. Significant discrepancies in perception about supervisors or managers performance can be used to clarify organizational or departmental expectations and/or recommend continuing education.

Staff Development Programs

With power comes responsibility and visionary library leaders know that they need to provide opportunities for all

employees to acquire those competencies necessary to participate in creating and sustaining new cultures and organizations. The funding of staff development programs communicates strongly that the new organizational culture values its employees and is willing to invest in their future. In addition, enlightened library leaders recognize that training sessions, topics selected, and trainers can serve as a powerful tool for communicating organizational values.

While most library employees are highly intelligent and educated, their supervisory and communication skills are often sadly lacking. In addition to these basic managerial competencies the complexity of todays organizations and the change process, require that both leaders and employees need to acquire or refresh their knowledge about organizational development, participative management skills, and the nature and distribution of power, to anticipate problems and to create common frames of reference.

While all employees believe, for example, that they should be involved in the decision making processes of their institutions, they may initially lack the courage or maturity to assume the consequences for the outcome of their decisions. Employees often exhibit a lack of understanding of the limits of their potential involvement caused by the real constraints of their positions, education, training, or the organization's

resources. Participative management and empowering others does not mean that everybody is involved in all organizational decisions and has equal access to power, rather it usually means that those employees who are affected by a particular decision and who have to implement that decision, should be involved in making that decision and should have sufficient power to implement it. Too many employees falsely believe that everything is their business and waste much organizational energy and efforts in meddling in other department's affairs. Communicating these differences takes time, trial and error, and much tact. It is the responsibility of leaders in evolving libraries to constantly define and redefine issues, listen to concerns and set limits.

The initial sharing of organizational power will create a high level of expectation among employees who have never had access to it. The positive feeling of using power to achieve goals and recognition invariably creates a need for more. In changing libraries leaders must artfully share their power appropriately, without raising unrealistic expectations and discouraging initiative. Staff development seminars can also be used to provide an common intellectual basis for understanding and discussing those larger managerial issues, which will be new to most employees. They may help to prevent some misunderstandings and misinterpretations of emerging organizational roles and responsibilities.

SUSTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL PROGRESS

It is inevitable that library employees become tired, disenchanted, frustrated and stressed during the lengthy and arduous change process. To prevent disillusionment, leaders must continue to act as the organizational role model and create reward systems which celebrate milestones and reinforce positive contributions towards the new organizational culture. They need to recognize individual excellence and group contributions in meetings, through staff recognition programs, write-ups in newsletters and other publications provide encouragement to continue the efforts.

Role Modeling

As organizational frustrations increase role modeling becomes more important. Both supporters and detractors of the change process will try to detect inconsistencies between words and deeds to justify their own behavior. "A leaders words and deeds must not only be internally consistent, but they must also coordinate with, support, or reinforce the new organizational ideals. They must match what the organization considers the epitome of desired behavior"9

Being a role model takes vigilance. Leaders must act

consistent with the values they profess to espouse according to Tom Peters, co-author of In Search of Excellence, this takes brute consistence, persistence, and attention to details. Role modeling requires that one's values are clear and internalized, so that decisions and actions can flow naturally, without much deliberation. Nothing looses the respect of staff as fast as inconsistencies between words and deeds.

Reward Systems

Carefully designed and implemented reward systems are excellent communication tools to reinforce the practice of new procedures, policies, and values. Effective library leaders must first communicate clearly which behaviors will be rewarded and then administer the reward fairly and consistently. While most libraries suffer from a lack of financial resources to recognize excellence, the use of non-financial recognition is limited only by a leader's creativity. They can range from the proverbial "pat-on-the-back" and thank-you-notes to public recognition through staff appreciation programs, excellence awards, and write-ups in library publications.

Of equal importance as rewarding desired behaviors is the identification and extinguishing of undesirable behaviors, mainly through withholding approval or recognition.

Recruiting and Orientation

When instituting a new organizational culture, the recruitment and orientation of new staff members are important means to reinforce core values. The higher the level of the vacant position, the more important becomes the fit between individual and organizational values. Using search committees to screen potential candidates for their suitability to a changing library environment not only insures that employees are able to articulate the organizational core values, but requires them to decide during the process, whether they want to be a part of the organization which they are "selling" to candidates. Most employees will not feel comfortable on search committees, if they do not agree with the library's new mission. If disagreements between individual belief systems and organizational values cannot be resolved, the employee will likely start looking for a library with values similar to his/her own.

The more succinctly the emerging culture is communicated before and during the interview process, the better the chances that a match between candidate and library can be achieved. If organizational expectations are clearly understood, the orientation process can than be used to integrate and socialize an new employees into the system. Formal orientations can present the factual data about the library, its

history, functions, and greater environment, while mentors and trainers can teach and explain the underlying philosophy and values of the library through daily contacts and informal means like friendships, and conversations during coffee breaks and lunches.

Career Counseling

Changes in organizational cultures will create many stresses and anxieties for long time employees, because the expectations and rules under which they functioned are loosing validity. If they support the emerging culture, they will likely seek to play an active part in it's creation and grow with the opportunities presented. Fostering the careers of those who support new directions gives library leaders another opportunity to reward commitment to change with more influence. Inside promotions give powerful signals of what attitudes, skills and behaviors are valued, because the persons are already well known and usually yield substantial informal power.

Those who are unable to support the new directions, will require special attention and patience. Dealing with them fairly and giving them time and opportunity to change, will signal to all employees that the library leader understands the difficulties inherent in the change process and proves his/her tolerance of individual differences. If it still becomes necessary to help an employee to leave the organization, the

decision will be supported, because staff knows that every effort has been made to assist that person to adjust to clearly communicated expectations. This is especially true if the majority of employees have become supportive of change and a reasonable time period has elapsed for staff to be knowledgeable about desirable behaviors. Should an employee be unable or unwilling to integrate him/herself into the new culture, it will be helpful to use career counseling, outplacement and other assistance to facilitate their separation. All these measures will attest to a leader's serious commitment to enlightened human resources practices and encourage risk taking by those who prove more adaptable within the organization.

CONCLUSION

Libraries are changing and need strong leadership to create adaptable organizations and involve employees in the management process. Leaders in library will have to communicate new directions during uncertain times. They must possess the skills to implement new organizational and programmatic changes and build the same skills in their staffs. As spokespersons of the organization they will be required to persuade their funding authorities, users and staffs, that the envisioned changes will better serve their needs. They will have to communicate their commitment to change not only through words

but through sustained actions.

Bibliography

1. Joanne R. Euster, "Leaders and Managers: Literature Review, Synthesis and a New Conceptual Framework," Journal of Library Administration 5 (Spring 1984): 55

2. Ibid. p. 56

3. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1987), 300-301.

4. John W. Gardner, The Moral Aspect of Leadership: Leadership Papers/5 (Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector, 1987) 14.

5. Joann R. Euster, " Leaders and Managers: Literature Review, Synthesis and a New Conceptual Framework," Journal of Library Administration, 5 (Spring 1984),: 57-58.

6. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, The Leadership Challenge: How to Get Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1987), 10.

7. Ibid. p. 10

8. Herbert White,"Oh, Where Have All the Leaders Gone?" Library Journal (October 1, 1987) : 68?

9. Bruce McAfee and Betty J. Ricks, "Leadership by Example: Do as I Do!" Management Solutions 31 (August, 1986): 16.